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THE MAHOGANY TREE



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This characteristic picture of the author of "The Mahogany Tree" is reproduced from a drawing made by the distinguished illustrator, Mr. Edmund Dulac, for the cover of the menu of a dinner of the Titmarsh Club of London. It is reprinted here by Mr. Dulac's very kind permission.



THE MAHOGANY TREE

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

NEW YORK
PRIVATELY PRINTED
CHRISTMAS 1910



The Mahogany Tree

“Some years since” said Thackeray in a public speech, “when I was younger, and used to frequent jolly assemblies, I wrote a Bacchanalian song to be chanted after dinner;” and a contemporary record has preserved a note of “the radiant gratification of his face whilst Horace Mayhew sang *The Mahogany Tree*, perhaps the finest and most soul-stirring of Thackeray’s social songs.”

In seeking a Souvenir of this Christmas season the ballad of “*The Mahogany Tree*” lends itself most felicitously to the present purpose which is to

“—wish you health, and love and mirth,
As fits the solemn Christmas-tide.”

Putting aside for an hour the affairs of a work-a-day world, let us take our places around the convivial board, on the time-stained surface of which we may find in fancy the initials of so many boon companions of other days cut deep.

It is pleasant to sport “round the stem of the jolly old tree” in congenial company, and to renew our youth at the bidding of this gracious Toast-master, the centennial of whose birth we shall celebrate presently; the anniversary of whose death was yester-e’en.

But while remembering that we shall be none the worse tomorrow for having been happy today, we are not permitted to forget entirely the Blue-devil Sprite that awaits the dawn. The play-spell is over; the lights are out in Vanity Fair; and here in Mr. Dulac's drawing is the leader of our Christmas Chorus as he shuts up the box and the puppets—"for our play is played out."

C. M. F.

• *Christmas 1910.*

THE MAHOGANY TREE

Christmas is here:
Winds whistle shrill,
Icy and chill,
Little care we:
Little we fear
Weather without,
Sheltered about
The Mahogany Tree

Once on the boughs
Birds of rare plume
Sang, in its bloom;
Night-birds are we:
Here we carouse,
Singing like them,
Perched round the stem
Of the jolly old tree.

Here let us sport,
Boys, as we sit;
Laughter and wit
Flashing so free.
Life is but short—
When we are gone,
Let them sing on
Round the old tree.

Evenings we knew,
Happy as this;
Faces we miss,
Pleasant to see.
Kind hearts and true,
Gentle and just,
Peace to your dust!
We sing round the tree.

Care, like a dun,
Lurks at the gate:
Let the dog wait;
Happy we'll be!
Drink, every one;
Pile up the coals,
Fill the red bowls,
Round the old tree!

Drain we the cup—
Friend, art afraid?
Spirits are laid
In the Red Sea.
Mantle it up;
Empty it yet;
Let us forget,
Round the old tree.

Sorrows, begone!
Life and its ills,
Duns and their bills,
Bid we to flee.
Come with the dawn,
Blue-devil sprite.
Leave us to-night,
Round the old tree.

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